

Moran Announces Pottawatomie County Hospitals Protected

Favorable Regulation Preserves Hospitals in Wamego and Onaga

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran announced the release of a federal regulation that will protect Kansans' access to health care in Pottawatomie County and surrounding areas.

On July 10, Moran met with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius in Washington, D.C., to discuss this issue and present options where CMS could preserve CAH designation for these hospitals.

"CMS had proposed a rule which would change the geographic classification of Riley, Geary and Pottawatomie Counties from rural to urban," Moran said. "A consequence of this change would have forced Community Healthcare System, Inc. in Onaga, which also has a clinic in Frankfort, and Wamego City Hospital in Wamego to lose their critical access designation. The loss of CAH status for these hospitals would mean significant loss of Medicare reimbursement and Kansans' access to critical health care services in these communities would be adversely affected. I requested to meet with Secretary Sebelius to ensure that she was aware of this important issue and that we were doing everything we could to help these hospitals and their patients. I am very pleased that CMS has exercised its discretion to allow these hospitals to maintain their CAH status."

Last Friday, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a final regulation for hospital payment rates that will allow continued Medicare participation for Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) located in counties that are re-designated from rural to urban. This designation helps many hospitals to operate in rural Kansas communities, including Community Healthcare System, Inc. in Onaga and Wamego City Hospital in Wamego.

"Congresswoman Jenkins and I have heard from many Kansans on this issue and we were committed to doing everything we could to help," Moran continued. "Also, the Kansas congressional delegation asked CMS to amend its regulations to allow continued CAH status for these hospitals. I am very glad that we were able to help these communities. Onaga and Wamego need adequate health care access to survive and flourish."

A hospital is eligible for designation as a CAH only if it is located in an area defined as rural. The CAHs located in Pottawatomie County are located in a county that was designated as a rural area in 2009 but will, as of October 1, 2009, be considered to be located in an urban area due to the re-designation of the area by the federal government. The new regulation allows a CAH located in a county that, in 2009, was defined as rural to be considered to meet the rural location requirement for 2010 even if such county was re-designated as urban.

Moran is Chairman of the House Rural Health Care Coalition and co-founder of the Congressional Community Pharmacy Coalition.

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